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*from her s.  
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AN

A D D R E S S

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

PILGRIM SOCIETY OF PLYMOUTH,

DECEMBER 22, 1834.

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BY GEO. W. BLAGDEN.

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PLYMOUTH, Dec. 22, 1834.

REV. GEORGE W. BLAGDEN.

SIR: In obedience to a vote of the Trustees of the Pilgrim Society, I have the pleasure to make the following communication:

'At a meeting of the Trustees of the Pilgrim Society, holden in Plymouth, Dec. 22, 1834,

'VOTED, That the thanks of the Trustees be presented to the Rev. GEORGE W. BLAGDEN, for his interesting and eloquent Discourse, delivered this day—and that a copy be requested for publication.'

With great esteem and regard,

I am, Sir,

Very respectfully,

JNO. B. THOMAS, Cor. Sec. Pil. Soc.





## ADDRESS.

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THE occasion on which I speak is not scanty of materials for an address like this. It is impossible for any one, acquainted with the history of New England, to stand on this rock, and look on these scenes, unmoved. The greatest difficulty arises from the multitude of thoughts and feelings which crowd in upon the mind, and render it hard to meet the interest already excited ;—a difficulty increased by the fact, that some of the first intellects in our land have devoted to this subject their noblest contemplations.

It is a characteristic feature in the history of man, that great effects frequently,—I may say generally,—proceed from comparatively slight causes. The fame of the most renowned individual may be the result, principally, of a single act of his life, performed in a few moments, though the whole period of his past existence may have been an unconscious preparation for that hour. The glory of the most celebrated nations of the world may be often traced, not so much to a long series of brilliant achievements, as to some isolated acts clearly and gloriously exhibiting the influence of great principles. On this account, a thing may be intrinsically small, but relatively magnificent,—as the centre of a circle is but a point, while the sweep of its circumference may include the infinite of space.

It is in this light that I am fond of contemplating the landing of the Pilgrim fathers. The transaction was, in itself, compared with other events in the diversified history of man, of little moment. A few wearied men and women, wanderers from their country, and kindred ; and father's house ; with circumscribed

pecuniary means, and plain garments, and no 'pomp and ceremony of state,'—land from a ship's boat, on a desolate and savage shore. In storm and tempest they begin their settlement; and through threatening diseases, and frequent deaths, they carry it on to a successful consummation. In this fact itself, there is little of peculiar importance. Other colonies, of other men, have faced similar trials, and passed through similar vicissitudes, to similar temporal results. Perhaps many of the existing generation, in Germany and in England, looked on that act of our fathers as a little,—even a contemptible undertaking! It is when you connect with this transaction the principles in which it originated,—the moral, intellectual and political events it has produced, and is at this hour producing;—it is when you contemplate its connection with posterity, rather than its relation to the age that gave it birth,—that it swells into an importance impossible for the speaker fully to express; and of which it is difficult to form any adequate conception. When you reflect on the landing of the Pilgrims in this light, it contains volumes of practical instruction to all the children of men. It shows them how the believed realities of the spiritual world can have a manifest and wonderful bearing on the transactions and duties of the present life. It summons them to behold the foundation of an empire of freemen, in that long-boat from a small and weather-beaten bark. It exhibits to them a small matter, kindling a great fire, and illuminating the civilized world;—a little leaven, in its silent, but sure and still operating power, leavening the whole mass of human society;—a single grain becoming a great tree, so that the fowls of the air may come and lodge in its branches!

Let me ask you, then, to stand with me on this spot, where so many influences concentrate; from which so much of light has radiated over two hemispheres of mankind; and, however feeble be our vision, look at past, present and future scenes,—drawing from such a prospect whatever of practical instruction we may be able to receive. In a word,—I would notice and illustrate some of those great principles associated with the event we celebrate.

We see, in the history of the Pilgrims, an interesting development of the truth, that the greatest changes in this world have been effected by the gradual operation of providential causes. Of this, it is apprehended there can be no doubt in the mind of any

one who has cast even a careless eye on the page of history. The reformation was not the work of a moment, or produced by the sudden efforts of great minds. Luther himself had no idea at its commencement, of the degree of influence he was afterward to exert over the destinies of the human race. At one time, he was on the eve of reconciliation with the Pope, and his voice of warning and strength was well nigh hushed forever. It was by the gradual progress of the absurd system of indulgences, and the gross violation of all ideas of common justice connected with it, that his soul was first aroused; and it was by as gradual a development of other abominations of Popery, that his spirit was 'stirred within him' to assume an higher stand, and a firmer tone, in the successive steps of that eventful crisis. Calvin, awakened by him, proceeded yet farther, declaring the truth still more clearly, and establishing, as we believe, a still purer system. It was his encounter also, with the Popish minions of Francis the First, that produced his celebrated Institutes of the Christian Religion. A similar result is exhibited in the history of the Puritans. It was not suddenly that they arrived at their conclusions. The selfish and uxorious quarrel of Henry the Eighth with the Pope was the opening door of light to their minds; and it was only by successive steps afterwards, and especially by intercourse with the reformers in Geneva and Germany, that they at length formed their clearer theories of civil and religious liberty. In these and most other great moral and political changes among mankind, it will be perceived that their original movers and promoters have been led along, well nigh against their wills, and altogether contrary to their expectations, by the gradual development of circumstances. Even Cromwell, Hampden, and Pym, those great leaders in subsequent changes, were on board ship, in the Thames, ready to embark for this country, when they were detained by an order of the council; and the history of England was affected for generations by that single act! Such are the facts on record. In respect to the theory to be drawn from them, different minds may arrive at varying conclusions. But, to myself, it appears to be a clear one, that in the words of the great dramatist of England—

‘There ’s a Divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.’

The Almighty has ever gone before man, by his providence, in advancing great changes on the earth, as He led Israel by the pillar of cloud and fire. In making this remark, it is not necessary to enter on any speculations touching the mysterious and sublime connection existing between Divine and human agency, while the freedom of the latter is preserved. I only state the fact,—which, I think, is undeniable,—a fact which no one, who prays to the Deity, can fail to recognize ; and when truly believed, is calculated to exert a most powerful and salutary influence, on the human mind. On this account, I have introduced it here ; since it presents to us another great principle developed in the history of our fathers. It is that they only who admit the universal agency, and obey the laws of Jehovah, are likely to discover and maintain the great principles of just government.

Let it once be practically admitted, that the Almighty does exert this agency over the movements of mankind, in harmony with their accountable being ; and, I think the following result will ensue :—Men will feel the necessity of obeying his laws. Convinced that secret things belong to Jehovah, they will be careful to regard the things He has revealed, as belonging to themselves ; so that nothing secret shall turn to their disadvantage, but all things work together for their good. The principle may be illustrated thus :—Nature, which is, in truth, only another name for the God of nature, is acknowledged by her philosophers as pervading all things by certain laws, which they are careful to discern and respect, that they may use her works to advantage, knowing that she is to be conquered by obeying her laws : and confident, that if these are obeyed, the surest path is opened for future discoveries, and still greater advantages. Now, who does not see, and will not admit, that this recognition of nature as universally prevalent, by the operation of certain fixed and immutable statutes, is the great stimulant to exertion in the philosophers who study her. If,—to carry out their own figure,—the goddess were not omnipresent ; or, if she were fickle, and did not abide by fixed principles, there would be little or no motive for discovering and obeying her commands. But, ever present, and ever constant as she is, men study her instructions, and strive to please her, that she may present to them yet newer and more glorious revelations of her mysteries,

until, like Newton, her favorite child, proceeding step by step, under her unerring guidance, they comprehend and demonstrate the movements of earth and of ocean,—of stars, systems and worlds! It is thus, by practically acknowledging the Divine agency, in the whole system of nature, that the wonderful secrets of her kingdom are revealed, and the innumerable blessings flowing from them participated.

The same principle applies to the intellectual, political, and moral world. Let the universal agency of Jehovah be also practically acknowledged here, as operating by laws adapted to it, and there will be the same desire to obey those laws as they are made known, while obedience to them will result in a corresponding discovery of great principles, and the enjoyment of proportionable intellectual and moral blessings. The fathers of New-England did thus acknowledge God in all their ways, and He did thus direct their steps. Hume admits this to have been a very marked feature in their character, affirming that it was to it they were indebted for their clear ideas concerning ecclesiastical and political liberty, and that, as an inevitable result, to them the English people owe all the freedom of their constitution.\* Nor, when you investigate the state of the case, is this wonderful. As the exaltation of the Eternal, in nature, leads to the study and firm declaration of her laws, insuring great clearness of intellect, and future discoveries and advantages; so, this acknowledgment of the Deity in the moral world produces a similar result, as to clearness in comprehending, and firmness in declaring and advancing the great laws of moral and political freedom. ‘If a man meet a dog alone,’—writes Hume, quoting from a speech of one of the puritans in Parliament, the sentiment of which, he says, is borrowed from Lord Bacon,—‘If a man meet a dog alone, the dog is fearful, though ever so fierce, by nature: but, if the dog have his master with him, he will out upon that man, from whom he fled before. This shows, that lower natures, when backed by higher, increase in courage and strength: and certainly man, being backed with omnipotency, is a kind of omnipotent creature. All things are possible to him that believes; and where all things are possible, there is a kind of omnipotency.

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\* Hist. of Eng. vol. III. 76, 372, 690.

Wherefore, let it be the unanimous consent and resolution of us all, to make a vow and covenant, henceforth, to hold fast our God and our religion ; and then shall we henceforth expect, with certainty, happiness in this world.'\*

It was on this simple but mighty principle that our puritan fathers felt and acted, amid all the scenes of human life, whether personal, domestic, political, or ecclesiastical. And, in its legitimate operation, it produced on their conduct the following results. Exalting Jehovah as they did, and recognizing His universal agency, they obeyed His law. And they found, as one of the first ideas suggested by the revelation containing it, especially as it is magnified and made honorable in the Gospel, that it was revealed for the good of all men, under the whole heaven. Consequently, the doctrine that every man, and every class of men, are to live and labor, in obedience to the Gospel, for the public good, was a legitimate, and inevitable deduction from such premises. In a moment, therefore, to their minds, all systems in the state not promoting the highest good of the whole people, and all in the church not advancing the highest good of the whole body of the redeemed, were, as to all the legitimate purposes of government, null and void, and ought to be overthrown. In contrast with public good, the crowns of kings, and the titles, insignia and privileges of nobles were, to them, but as the gewgaws of the savages among whom they found a refuge ; and the mitres of bishops, and the gowns of priests, but as the garnishing of the sepulchre. How do you promote the greatest moral and intellectual good of the people ?—was the question they asked the one : What are you doing for the glory of Christ and the church ?—was the interrogatory they propounded to the other : And, while the questions remained unanswered, they dissented from both, and resolved to be the slaves of neither !

It is not maintained that the great principles of liberty appeared immediately to our fathers, in all the clearness and force with which, through their instrumentality, they now present themselves to their descendants. But, it is affirmed, that in resigning themselves to this great duty of obedience to God, in a firm adherence to His laws, they necessarily embraced the very nucleus of politi-

cal and ecclesiastical freedom; and cherished in their souls, that, which only waited for circumstances to draw it forth into active existence and beauty—as the seed of the earth springs forth to vegetation and maturity, under the favoring rains, and sun, and breezes of heaven. This, their one leading characteristic of responsibility to the Deity, contained, in itself, the germ of correct principles in all civil and ecclesiastical government. It caused other things to assume clearness and order around it; as the magnet, dropped in the sand, influences the grains that it affects, to assume positions, agreeably to their respective polarity.

That this is not a theory invented for the present occasion will be evident to any one who consults their history, and notices how wonderfully their sentiments concerning government, were struck out by the fire and the hammer of the word of God. Milton, for example, in his essay on ‘the ready and easy way to establish a free commonwealth,’ writes thus: ‘God in much displeasure gave a king to the Israelites, and imputed it a sin to them that they sought one. But Christ apparently forbids his disciples to admit of any such heathenish government. ‘The kings of the Gentiles,’ saith he, ‘exercise lordship over them;’ and they that ‘exercise authority upon them are called benefactors; but ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serveth.’ \* \* \* ‘And what government,’ he continues, ‘comes nearer to this precept of Christ, than a free commonwealth; wherein they who are greatest are perpetual servants and drudges to the public, at their own cost and charges; neglect their own affairs, yet are not elevated above their brethren; live soberly in their families, walk the street as other men, may be spoken to freely, familiarly, friendly, without adoration? Whereas a king must be adored like a demigod, with a dissolute and haughty court about him, of vast expense and luxury, masks and revels, to the debauching of our prime gentry, both male and female, not in their pastimes only, but in earnest, by the loose employments of court service, which will be then thought honorable. There will be a queen of no less charge; in most likelihood outlandish and a papist, besides a queen-mother such already; together with both their courts and numerous train; then a royal issue, and ere long severally their sumptuous courts; to



the multiplying of a servile crew, not of servants only, but of nobility and gentry, bred up then to the hopes, not of public, but of court offices, to be stewards, chamberlains, ushers, grooms—\* \* \* and the lower their minds debased with court opinions, contrary to all virtue and reformation, the haughtier will be their pride and profuseness.'

The same principles are involved in the proceedings of the pilgrims in their 'solemn combination as a body politic,' formed at Cape Cod, more than a month before they landed here; and still more clearly in their subsequent acts. The public good is ever recognized, with great emphasis, as the end of all government: while Davenport and his companions, at New-Haven, resolved, formally, to be guided in all their principles of legislation by the word of God.

But, there was another point to be attained, and another evil to be avoided, by our ancestors. To escape from the tyranny of unjust kings, and the domination of lords spiritual, was not to be delivered from the tyranny of a lawless democracy, or the passions of an ungovernable mob. And therefore, the same solemn acknowledgment of the Creator, which, in its legitimate influence, led them to throw off the yoke of despotism, and cast aside the mummeries of superstition, taught them at the same time that the people must be rightly instructed, or they did but place themselves in the power of a monster more horrible than had ever been produced by despotism or Rome. It was their great endeavor, therefore, in the midst of the most trying and unpropitious circumstances, to spread abroad among all men that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom, and that departure from evil which alone is understanding: deeply convinced that where there is no vision, the people perish. Hence, they had not been seventeen years in the wilds of New-England, before we find them dedicating Harvard College to Christ and the church; rearing it 'to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity;'—and also establishing free schools throughout all their villages. You find them ever paying the strictest attention to every ordinance of God, for the sake of man: devoting special attention to the preaching of His word, which they were peculiar for loving, in contradistinction to Papists, and even the Conformists of the Church of England: and mani-

festing, at the same time, the most punctilious respect for the Sabbath, that they might sustain among themselves, and throughout the whole community, an ever operating conviction of responsibility to God. And, while this regard for the King of kings, in all their ways, permitted them to submit to the tyranny of no earthly potentate, whether political or ecclesiastical, it, at the same time, made them ready, in a remarkable degree, to acknowledge and honor all those distinctions in society originating in intellectual and moral capacities. So that while they would submit to no unjust laws, they were, emphatically, the friends of order. Scarcely any fact in their history stands out in bolder relief, than their willingness and anxiety to render to moral and intellectual merit, the homage of their respect, obedience and love. It was from this spirit, that their uncouth, but feeling attempts at poetry originated, in honor of Bradford, Hooker, Cotton, Norton, Prince, and other worthies, whose praises are sung in 'New-England's Memorial.'

In short, it is impossible to read any history of the Puritans, even with a very slight degree of attention, and not come to the conclusion that it was this, their practical recognition of the Divine agency and their own accountability, which principally modified and directed them in all their conduct. In giving to it this prominence, therefore, I am not so much under the influence of professional bias, as I am the faithful recorder of indisputable truth. Hume, as we have already seen, admits this to have been a prominent feature in their character. A most eloquent writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, often cited on occasions like this, directly refers their nobleness and independent firmness to this cause. And it need scarcely be said, to those who have read his history, that it is continually implied and referred to, by Neal, the principal historian of their lives and characters. This principle guided and sustained them, in all their domestic, as well as public transactions. In choosing their place of abode, though to reach it, they crossed the ocean, and penetrated a howling wilderness in the depth of winter,—the conviction that God and liberty were there, made them cheerfully call it their country. There can be little doubt that this, as truly as the peculiar nature of their circumstances, led them to that equal division of land, which politicians tell us is so great a safeguard of freedom. In joy and in sorrow—in

weakness and strength—in danger and safety—in prosperity and adversity—with friends and foes—in the court and in the camp—amid the war-whoops of untutored savages and the dwellings and etiquette of civilized man, they acknowledged God in all their ways, and were emphatically men of praise and prayer.

Most, if not all of what we may dare to term their faults, arose from their carrying out this principle—in the universal proneness of human nature—to an inordinate and unwarrantable extreme; and, like the good man of the poet,—

‘E’en their failings lean’d on virtue’s side.’

How natural was it, for example, that men, who thus recognized the Divine agency, in all things, should ascend directly to that agency, in their meditations, when beholding any appearances in the natural world, for which they could not satisfactorily account, by any laws of nature previously discovered. It was therefore the case, that if a comet appeared in the heavens, and any of their great political or clerical worthies had died, even within months of its advent, the event was generally connected with their death, and appeared in the heavens as an evil omen of the wrath of God for their sins, or,—

————— ‘from its horrid hair,  
Shook pestilence and war.’

They have been accused of paying too great and scrupulous an attention to little things; but they associated those things with God, and their duty to His government. Like their own immortal acts on this rock, though in themselves small, they were relatively great, and in their eyes, of the utmost importance to present and future generations. Especially was the dress of the clergy—a chief ground of their non-conformity—associated with all the enormities and absurdities of the Church of Rome. It has therefore been well observed, that ‘the wisdom of zeal for any object is not to be measured by the particular nature of that object, but by the nature of the principle, which the circumstances of the times, or of society, have identified with that object.’ Judging our fathers by such a rule, their zeal in adhering to principle in little things, will be seen to have been neither surprising nor unreasona-

ble. Are they not, in this respect, an example to be imitated by their descendants ?

It has been said that they were gloomy, and austere : nor, are we disposed to deny that there was an appearance of such a character in many things we have heard concerning them. But, allowing that what has been thus reported is true, it will be found on a candid examination, that they were the subjects of a joy with which the stranger intermeddleth not—unspeakable, and full of glory. Blessed with a conscience clear in the sight of the Deity, their pleasures were, doubtless, as superior to those of the sensual Charles II., or the boisterous revelry of the cavaliers, as the calm delights of innocence are greater than the unnatural levity of guilt. Theirs was not indeed the laughter which is mad, in the midst of which the heart is sorrowful,—it was the calm sunshine of the soul—obscured, we are ready to admit, occasionally, by clouds—for they lived in a stormy time—but still leaving light and ineffable glory behind :—for, amid all the inner chambers of their souls, there was comparative purity and peace ; and they must have been the dwelling places of a peculiar joy. A joy which led them, it may be, to value too lightly some of the innocent pleasures of life,—but, which cast even these aside, rather from its own intrinsic greatness, than from any morbid misery of mind. In contrasting the moral pleasures, which must have been theirs, with the lesser delights they may have too much slighted, it were not unreasonable to ask their accuser, in the language of the Dane to his mother :

‘ Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,  
And batten on this moor ? ’

With all their disdain of those pleasures that not unfrequently enervate a people, and accompany and precede the decline and fall of states, they did cultivate and experience, in a high degree, those moral joys found in the domestic circle, amid the pure and social intercourse of ‘ wife, children, and friends.’ Numerous passages might be cited from their history, as evidences of this ; while with respect to both these points in their character—their tenacious adherence to principle in little things, and their superiority to some common pleasures, so often alleged by those who would obscure the brightness of their fame, it is a reasonable question, whether

their ancient rigor may not be more favorable to free institutions, than the modern levity of those, who would treat that rigor with a sneer.

I have thus developed, to the best of my ability, the true principles which, it is conceived, should guide us in attempting a fair analysis of the character of the Pilgrims. They consist in a clear and practical acknowledgment of a universal Divine agent, and a corresponding obedience to the laws of his natural and moral government. It was this which raised valleys, sunk mountains, and annihilated oceans before them, in their flight from the house of bondage to this Canaan of liberty and rest.

Nor was this unnatural. It is a remarkable fact, that many of the greatest minds, both of antiquity and modern times, whether the influence they exerted on society be good or bad, have manifested a marked and strong tendency to acknowledge the existence and agency of some great and mysterious being, obedience to whose dictates was to lead and support them in their course, and insure the success for which they panted. Those well versed in their respective systems of philosophy inform us, that both Pythagoras and Plato taught that 'in the universe of things, there is nothing that happens unadvisedly, or by chance ; but all things depend on the force and efficacie of their ideal causes,' in the Divine mind. The Demon in which Socrates believed was a still more interesting form of the same principle. The Grecians founded the most of their colonies under the professed guidance of oracles, directing them agreeably to the will of their gods. The Romans consulted similar guides, and watched the flight of birds, and examined the entrails of beasts, for like purposes. In modern times, all his biographers agree in designating it as a marked peculiarity in Napoleon, that his mysterious ideas concerning his own 'destiny,' yet to be accomplished, operated as powerful stimulants to his naturally energetic mind. In the trying circumstances of war, the most distinguished commanders are in the habit of appealing, in a similar way, to Heaven, knowing the influence of such an act on the souls of their followers. And the late Lord Byron is exhibited as deriving a degree of consolation, under a severe domestic affliction, by a recurrence to this theory. The human mind appears to need the practical acknowledgement of 'a present Deity,' to support

and animate it to high exertion amid the difficulties of life. Our fathers, ever recognizing the truth as received in its purity from Divine revelation, went forth in its energy and accomplished what they did. This was the great point around which their character was formed, and from which their glory radiated.

The conduct it produced presses on our attention other important truths. Their landing on this rock, and its consequences, forcibly exhibit the means and advantages of firm frankness in the declaration and support of great principles. Who would now say, he had rather the puritans had never spoken and acted as they did in relation to the abuses of the English court and hierarchy? Where would the cause of civil and religious freedom probably now have been throughout the world, had they remained silent and inactive?—‘If liberty, extinguished on the continent, had been suffered to expire there, whence was it ever to have emerged in the midst of that thick night that would have invested it?’—And yet, there were thousands of noble spirits in England, who deprecated what was represented as the stubbornness of the Puritans. They were persecuted in soul, more than in body. They were made the subjects of ridicule by court and king. They were the jest of the scoffer and wine-bibber throughout the kingdom. They were parted from their families, deprived of their support, and shut up in the common prisons. The whole influence of what men of fine sensibilities most dread,—odium and scorn, misrepresentation and ridicule in high places,—was sent forth against them. Yet, amid all the boisterous waves of human passion, they were ‘firm as the surge-repelling rock,’—steadily standing by the success or failure of their avowed principles! In every puritan, was found such a character as is so admirably described and admired by the Roman poet,\* ‘a man so just and tenacious of principle, that neither the clamors of a raging populace, nor the

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\* ‘*Iustum et tenacem propositi virum  
 Non civium ardor prava jubentium,  
 Non vultus instantis tyranni  
 Mente quatit solida.*——  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
*Si fractus illabatur orbis,  
 Impavidum ferient ruine.*’

HOR. CAR. LIB. III. 3.

frowns of a threatening tyrant, could ever shake him from his firm resolve.' It would scarcely be too much to add, in the sentiment of the same writer, that had the great globe itself fallen, the puritan would have been found fearless amid its ruins!—The means of this their firmness, I have already exhibited, in what has been said : on its advantages, it becomes us to dwell, at this time, with interest. The fearless declaration of great truths arouses into activity the public mind. Never was there, in the whole history of mankind, a greater display of the noble energies of mind, than is presented in the history of England, during the celebrated seventeenth century,—the age of the Puritans. Then, Coke, and Hampden, and Raleigh, and Selden, and Owen, and Howe, and Baxter, cast the splendor of their intellects on the principles of law and religion, and left witnesses for themselves for after ages to consult, and award them their meed of fame. Then, Newton commenced those discoveries in science, which have made his name immortal, and Bacon taught succeeding generations his system of inductive philosophy ; then, Shakspeare, 'fancy's child,' had his own genius warmed by the fervor of the times, and became a living original of the picture drawn by himself—

'The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;  
And, as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation, and a name ;'

then, Bunyan, in his own homely figure, pulled and it came, until he left a sacred drama, over which piety has bent with delight in succeeding ages, and shall bend and be delighted for ages more ; then Milton awoke, and wrote,

'Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme,'—

making himself the companion of mighty spirits, who remember him by the associations of sympathy, as truly as by the study of his works. The firm declaration of great principles aroused men's souls. It was like striking a deep tone in music ; all equally chorded instruments vibrated around ! It was like the spear of Laocoon entering the trembling sides of the Grecian horse ; mind,

armed in its panoply, sent forth an answering sound, and poured forth its powers, until the citadels of error tottered to their base ! It becomes us, then, to recollect that the firm declaration of great principles produces such an effect, and never to shrink from their proclamation. It is the characteristic of error to practise concealment, and assume a Protean diversity of forms. Truth speaks out; whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, and is immutable !

This firm declaration of principles causes their advocates to endure the self-denial and sufferings necessary for their propagation. Human sympathy is thus excited in their favor, and men begin to acknowledge the sentiments thus nobly maintained. It is a wise remark of Burke, that 'it is laid in the unalterable constitution of things :—None can aspire to act greatly, but those who are of force greatly to suffer.' I believe that this is true ; and that it is a truth involving matter for reflection on which, were there time, we might profitably ponder. Admitting it as just,—what an illustration of the power of suffering in acting greatly is beheld in the history of our fathers ! The fact that they were persecuted,—that they fled from persecution,—that they came in suffering and poverty to a desolate shore, in the dreariness of winter, and reared their rude habitations amid the ' pelting of the pitiless storm,' and the ravages of disease :—these are the acts which give power to their principles ; contrast the greatness of truth with the littleness of error, the more strikingly ; and attract the eyes of multitudes to behold her loveliness, and acknowledge the power of her sway. These things cause a reaction in her favor, and make those who suffer for her sake speak the more loudly and successfully in her cause. Who, then, would have the case of the Pilgrims other than it is ? Who would not rejoice that they were counted worthy thus to suffer ? Who would not rather be the descendant of such men as these, than of such as might have come in plenty, and power, and pride, to gratify their selfishness, and enjoy a splendid repose ? If a heathen could declare, that a great man struggling with adversity is a sight worthy of the gods ; shall not we venerate Christians thus suffering, with Christian fortitude, for conscience' sake !

It is by the firm and frank declaration of great principles, then, that the minds of men are awakened ; and their reason and feel-



ings drawn forth to embrace and defend them. All history shows that truth has ever been thus advanced. Columbus declared it in the midst of discouragement and silent contempt, for years, until at last the difficulties he met and conquered added to the glory of the man who first passed the portals of the west, and lifted the veil that hid one half of the human race from any knowledge of the other. Galileo declared it, and he was found and visited by a puritan, when grown old, and a prisoner in the Inquisition, for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican friars thought. He too has triumphed proportionably now. The reformers never would have reformed, had they not dared to declare their sentiments. The Pilgrims never would have planted here the foundations of civil and religious liberty, if they had not possessed the courage to avow, in their native land, and in the faces of their enemies, those great truths on which all liberty is based.

It will be a strong motive for acting under the influence of such sentiments as these, to reflect farther—that the firm vindicators of truth shall be had in everlasting remembrance. If ever the emotion of moral sublimity rises with an unspeakable power in the human mind, it is when the bold asserters of great natural, political, or moral truths pass through the fiery ordeal of persecution, and are obscured for a time, in the deep darkness of popular denunciation, only to emerge, at last, in the splendor of successful effort, and triumphant truth. This will ever be the case with such champions of right. It has been strikingly so with the discoverers of disputed natural and moral truth in other days ; it will be so in all time to come. Not only must truth itself be eventually acknowledged, and therefore its vindicators and promoters in troublous times be proportionably honored ; but even its opposers themselves will find a palliative to conscious unworthiness in admiring virtue, when its distance does not permit it to come in contact with their own passions, and condemn, directly, their own deeds. It was on this principle that the Jews garnished the sepulchres of their fathers, while they were recreant to their virtues ;—and it will be on the same principle, that many, in all time, shall honor the memory of our fathers, though they may hate and oppose the principles that made them what they were !

I have spoken of the influence of a practical recognition of the Deity in leading to the discovery of great principles, and producing firmness in the declaration of them. I have dwelt also on the advantages of such a declaration in arousing the public mind, exciting an interest in the truth, and causing its advocates to be had in everlasting remembrance. What a testimony for the truth of these positions do we find in the history of Old and New England, for the last two centuries.

The former, though she persecuted the Puritans, has nevertheless, held to their great leading principles as established at the Reformation ; and the operation of these, notwithstanding great comparative imperfection in carrying them out to their consequences, particularly in ecclesiastical government, has made her a noble spectacle to all nations. In natural science, she has given to the world the greatest Mathematician and Astronomer it has ever known. The father of inductive philosophy, and the dissector of the human understanding were her sons. While, in morals and religion, time would fail, were we to enter on an enumeration of the great minds she has produced. More than all, England has stood out before the world, in one of its darkest periods, as the advocate of moral principles, when all principles, but those of selfishness, seem to have been despised. When the most refined nation of the continent avowedly dethroned the Almighty, and declared Christianity a lie, her priesthood impostors, and death an eternal sleep ; when the mighty convulsions of human passion that ensued brought forth, at last, the child of revolution, who, availing himself of the awful crisis, made it bend to his ambition, filled all Europe with slaughter, and put his foot on the necks of her proudest kings ;—England remained firm in her adherence to moral and political truth ; and when the hearts of men were failing them through fear, she stood forth amid the tempest, like Moses from amid the thunders of Mount Sinai, holding in her hands the law for mankind ! Who can estimate the extent and power of her influence, at that time, over the public mind ? Where will you go for a spectacle of greater moral sublimity than is exhibited in her conduct then ? When will she be forgotten by succeeding generations ? When will the

friends of liberty and law cease to love her with all her faults ? At this moment, in the four quarters of the world she is found, the friend and protector of moral principles ; giving ample proof, that

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‘ Where Britain’s pow’r  
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too ! ’

Although our own land is in its infancy, compared with that of our fathers, yet, already have we drawn the lightning from the clouds of heaven, and given to the world, in the new application of steam, that which almost annihilates space, and is doing more to connect man with man, in the intercourse of life, than has ever been done before. In religious philosophy, our own Edwards has left works now studied and admired by the profoundest minds in Europe ; while the sympathy our successful struggles for freedom have excited is producing an effect, at this moment, in more than one nation of the European world. It would not, probably, be too much to say, that there is not a kingdom which does not, in some degree, feel our influence. Even in England itself, the principles of our fathers, though their authors have been dead for centuries, yet live, and operate ; advancing step by step, —and of late moving onward so rapidly, that her long established hierarchy and nobility begin to feel their power.

The past, then, is, at least, secured. We, the descendants of the Pilgrims, may prove faithless to the high trust committed to our care,—reckless of those great truths for which they toiled and suffered, and were willing to die. But, their memory shall still live ! Wherever the great principles of liberty they established shall be valued, they will be revered. Even though such principles, themselves, shall be disregarded, yet, while man continues what he is, a being of conscience and reason, there will be multitudes who will honor those, whose sentiments they may be ashamed to avow and vindicate. The record of their deeds is stamped, indelibly, on the history of time ; their names are already chronicled with the master-spirits of the world ! As the shipwrecked mariners of Rome were wont to hang the pictures of their disasters in the temple of Neptune, to keep alive the record of their dangers and escape ; so have the

Fathers of New England left a memorial of their trials and their triumph on the aspect of the world ; and they shall be had in everlasting remembrance. Providence,—turning, wheel within wheel, as in the sublime vision of the prophet, labors on the side of truth. It is but preparing for her more glorious appearance, after all changes, and the more permanent victory of her faithful adherents. The nature of the human mind itself, even when its operations are those of guilt, is still, in some important respects, in her favor ; and the very wrath of man shall be made, eventually, subservient to her praise.

But, God forbid that the supposition I have dared to imagine, of our desertion and disregard of these principles, shall ever be anything but imaginary. God forbid that we should not here, on the rock of their toil, give ourselves anew to the duty of honoring them by our future actions, as truly as by our present words. Here, then, on this rock, from which we have been taking a survey of those great truths with which it is, and shall be forever associated, here let us pledge ourselves to be true to our fathers ! Look hence, abroad over our beloved country ! How much is there to encourage us ! Twelve millions of freemen blessed by the influence of those from whom many of you have descended ! The sails of our commerce flapping in every breeze ;—our flag honored abroad, and waving over a vast extent of territory at home ;—agriculture and manufactures, hand in hand, leading us rapidly to a noble independence from all other lands, and pouring into our coffers the wealth produced by their joint exertions ! All this has been done, through the influence of those, whose characters and actions we now commemorate.

But, is there nothing discouraging before us ? We have beheld the bright part of the picture ; let us not be afraid to gaze on anything threatening, or dark, and to bear ourselves accordingly. Such a spirit would dishonor the descendants of the Pilgrims. Is there not ground for the apprehension that many in our land are beginning to deny the agency and government of that Being, whom our fathers, following and obeying, made their constant instructor in great truths,—their constant guide and support in great actions ? Are there not many avowed atheists rising in the midst of the sons of New England ? As the sure result of this, are there not many,

who, in the spirit of licentiousness and not of true liberty, are disposed to deny the correctness of the distinctions arising from moral and intellectual endowments; and in a spirit of radicalism are aiming to break down the necessary relations of well-ordered society, that they may raise the degraded to stations for which they are not fitted, and the ignorant to the management of concerns which they cannot clearly comprehend. Are not many endeavoring to create a collision between the rich and poor,—between professional and working men; as if the wealthy do not constantly send forth from their coffers that of which poverty may avail itself to improve its condition; and the scholar did not work for the public good with his mind, as truly as the mechanic or husbandmen labor for it with their hands? Is not the rapid and increasing influx of foreigners, unacquainted, to a great degree, with the nature of our institutions—and withal, not unfrequently ignorant and degraded,—yet soon admitted to the privilege of voting at the ballot box, rapidly becoming not an imaginary danger? And, as the worthies of our revolution have now nearly departed,—and one of the brightest links connecting us with that eventful crisis, has of late been broken in the demise of Lafayette,—is there not some ground for the fear, that our people may gradually forget the price our liberties have cost, and begin to esteem them too lightly; while the power of ambition, and its accompanying passions, may avail, in the struggle for office and its emoluments, to break that sacred charm, hitherto binding us to the freedom of our country? Add to all this, a system, in many of the States, creating a diversity of mercantile and agricultural interests, a radical difference of mind and manners, and a dangerous jealousy of feelings, which lay a foundation for constant distrust, and sometimes for what approaches to the nature of rancour between those who should be chief friends. I allude to the system of southern slavery:—a system we all deplore; and to deal with which, as it ought to be dealt with, a comprehensive mind and benevolent heart are needed, if ever such things were in requisition, in the history of our land.

These dangers have now been mentioned, not to excite needless alarm, but that we may dare to look at them, and in the spirit of those great truths on which we have been dwelling, as connected with the history of our fathers,—meet and counteract them. To

do this, permit me to call your attention to another great truth associated with this occasion. It is, that no changes for the good of mankind can be permanent and progressive, unless they be radical. By this I mean, that the principles on which such changes proceed, shall not only be acknowledged by the head, but be seated in the heart of the people. I mean that such changes should be established on a sincere and deeply-rooted love for them; that they should not be merely external, and effected or acquiesced in from cold convictions of duty, or because circumstances would not let them be avoided; but because the people over whom they are to exert influence, desired them as a good, and sought after, and enjoyed them accordingly. I mean also, that in endeavoring to produce them, we should bear constantly in mind, that the duty of laboring to create the feeling on which all external rectitude, to be genuine, can alone be founded, is never to be intermitted or interfered with; but that the production of this love for duty must be the chief end, and all others, however important, must be subordinated to this; otherwise we shall never permanently effect our object. In a word, it is more important to bring the public mind to the heartfelt acknowledgement of the agency of God, and accountability to him, as it existed and operated in the hearts of the Pilgrims, than it is to promote any other changes in society, however beneficial. And this, for the plain reason, that unless it be brought to such a heartfelt, practical acknowledgement of the Deity, in all its actings, the feeling on which you can alone found permanent and progressive good, does not, and cannot exist. It is well to summon men to the accomplishment of some virtuous enterprise. It is well to persuade them to give up some destructive sin. These things ought we to do. But, there is another, and a greater thing we are not to leave undone. It is to persuade them to feel and manifest a cordial and practical acknowledgement of God, as their moral governor, in all their ways. Otherwise, however well you may succeed, for a time, by the influence of motives, operating, in different forms, on human selfishness, in promoting your benevolent designs, you only 'scotch the snake, not kill it.' The passions of men, unchanged and uncontrolled by the fear of God, will still be like an unruly and boisterous flood; obstructed at one point, they will rush, in an impetuous torrent, to some

weaker embankment, and finding a new outlet, rejoice in their power to move ravingly onward to their precipice. There is a principle of selfishness in the human heart, the fruitful source of all evils, and the great obstacle in the way of all good, which,

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‘ Vital in every part,  
Cannot, but by annihilating, die.’

The fear of God in the heart, alone can slay it ; and therefore, if you would have any great change for the good of mankind permanent and progressive, this fear must be implanted ; and the change, being radical, will be successful. Our fathers, we have seen, possessed it ; and, through toil, danger, persecution and death, they urged forward their principles to a glorious consummation.

It is impracticable to enter on any minute examination of their history here ; but it would be easy to show, that so long as they proceeded on this great truth, in the administration of their civil and ecclesiastical government, they were successful ; but, whenever they departed from it, and endeavored to insure a merely external adherence to what is right, and a constrained obedience to their laws, they lost ground. We admit that the circumstances in which they were placed in relation to England, and the character of the times in which they lived, rendered it natural, and for aught we can see, necessary, that they should have made church-membership essential to the character of a freeholder, and should have excluded opposing sects in religion from the privileges of their government. But, whatever may have been the necessities of their case, at that peculiar crisis of their history, no one probably will now maintain that such proceedings were either right, or expedient, as a general rule of conduct. No one will, probably, maintain that they did not lose ground while they continued to persist in them, after the peculiar circumstances in which they originated, had passed away. The fact that both measures have been laid aside, in the progress of free principles ; and that the last link connecting Church and State in this Commonwealth has, happily, been broken, by abolishing the law requiring a general assessment for the support of public worship, is a sufficient evidence of the state of public opinion on this point.

Apply this principle, then, to the dangers we have noticed, as now threatening the best interests of this country, and it will lead to important conclusions relative to our duty in supporting and advancing the institutions of our fathers. It is admitted, that there are atheists and disorganizers in the midst of us, and no one can reasonably deny, that within a few years, they have been alarmingly increasing. What shall be done? Shall we stifle their voice? Shall we call on the strong arm of the civil law to interfere and crush them? I answer, on the strength of the principle we are now considering, No. Let them speak out in the vindication of their sentiments; and so long as they put forth no overt act of transgression against the laws, and hinder not others in the declaration and advancement of their religious opinions, let them speak through the public press, with the utmost freedom. If you prosecute them, you give them an advantage by that very act, and make it far more difficult to overthrow their erroneous sentiments. By such an act, you not only, in a great degree, separate them from yourselves, and lose the opportunity of convincing their intellects, and awakening their consciences, and affecting their hearts, by the weight of your own arguments; but you give them all that power derived from the fact that they suffer for conscience's sake; a power, which the speaker is inclined to believe, possesses more magic influence over the popular mind, in favor of any system that may be the subject of it, than almost anything else beside. He would not, therefore, permit error to have so great an advantage over truth. No, let it be met fairly with the panoply of mind. In the words of a puritan, on this very subject, of 'the liberty of unlicensed printing'—I again allude to Milton,—'Though all the winds of doctrine be let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple. Who ever knew truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?'

In like manner, if dangers beset us from the vast immigration of foreigners, ignorant of our free institutions, and multitudes of them degraded in character; let the only ægis for our protection be the shield of truth. Let us teach them the principles of our fathers. Taught to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords, the blessed



and only Potentate, they will become useful citizens of a free republic; otherwise, they will become its worse pests, if not its certain destruction. And if endangered by the gradual forgetfulness, in our citizens, of the price that was paid for our liberties, and the shallowness of the conviction of their real value now that they are possessed; what so likely to keep alive the recollection of their price and worth, as the spreading abroad among all our people, of the love of that Being, one of the great duties to whom is, a remembrance of all the way in which He has led us; and a constant attention to the public good?

Does slavery hang, like a dark cloud, full of lightning and storm,—portentous,—over some of the fairest portions of our land? Let us calmly observe,—let us dread,—let us hate it,—let us strive, as one man, like our own Franklin, gazing on the thunder-cloud, to disarm it of its terrors, and dissipate, and annihilate it forever! But how? How? By standing at a distance,—the distance of hundreds of miles,—and crying out, of danger, and death, and crime; and upbraiding the unhappy victims who are exposed to the gathering tempest—partly, be it remembered, through our own instrumentality—as murderers, man-stealers, and pirates? No, my fellow-citizens—but by approaching, and presenting to that dark storm, the moral conductors of heaven! In plain language, by relying mainly, for the removal of that awful curse, on the fear of God, in the hearts of our Southern brethren. If you do not make this the foundation of your appeal to them, even though you may destroy slavery as an external evil, you will leave them and their negroes, still the victims of a more degrading and dangerous bondage, and slaves of the most cruel of all task-masters. The bondage of sin, and the service of Satan, I confidently assert to be a greater evil, and one more dangerous in its aspect on our institutions, and the temporal happiness of ourselves and fellow-citizens, in the North or South, at the East, or in the far West; whether bond or free, than all other evils combined. Like the fabled box of Pandora, this contains the elements of all our troubles. This being the case, it follows in my mind, that no system of measures for the abolition of slavery can be either right or expedient, which is calculated to shut out your preachers of righteousness, and your instructors of youth, from free and welcome access to the

southern section of our country. Go then to the benevolent in our Southern, as well as in our Northern States. Combine your reasonings, and feelings, and efforts with them, in the spirit of the Gospel of Christ, and on those benevolent foundations it has laid for such appeals deep in the heart of every Christian, and you may cherish the reasonable hope of calming the troubled elements, and dispersing the gathering clouds, ere the storm burst. More than all, go, telling them that under different degrees of guilt, we are all equally transgressors; tell them, that even in the history of Plymouth colony, it is recorded, that the son of king Philip, and many of his warriors were sold as slaves; and as brethren, mingle your tears in a common penitence, and encourage each other's hearts to a common reformation! But, if you take a different course,—if you keep at the distance of leagues from those your brethren, and say,—‘Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou!’—what can we expect, from all we know of human nature, but that rancorous passions will be roused in the breasts of the great majority of the South, and the opportunity of disseminating among them the only radical principle of great changes,—the fear of God in the heart of man,—be denied us! Then, what will become of the poor slave; and where will be the best temporal and spiritual interests of his master? If ever the mind of another Burke was needed to throw out before an excited people, those great principles which should guide them on this question, it is needed now! ‘O rise some other such!’ There is action enough, but we want principle to guide action.

As, then, the practical recognition of the God of our Fathers leads us to greatness, so will it deliver us from the dangers that are connected with greatness. As it will preserve us from the miseries of despotism on the one hand, so will it save us from those of radicalism on the other. As it will lead us to meet cheerfully, and act promptly and rightly in circumstances that are new, so will it cause us to venerate, and so far as possible preserve, whatever of truth may be found in what is old. The great and fundamental principles of freedom resulting from the practical recognition of the Deity are as immutable as his own eternal nature. They may assume, in the varying circumstances of man's existence, different forms of action; but like the providential movements of Jehovah

himself, they are, in all their appearances, whether mild or severe, expressions only of the same benevolent love. In their operation, therefore, on the soul of man, they prepare him to receive right impressions, producing right actions,—from things present and past,—things new and old. In the present instance, we need their influence as we contemplate what is past. Here, then,—subject to their power,—let us gaze on these scenes, and receive the impression they are calculated to make! That rock,—that ocean,—these hills,—those graves!—‘the graves of those that cannot die!’—to him who gazes on them in the fear of the God of our fathers,—are eloquent. They speak to us of truths immutable as Heaven,—precious as the happiness of earth! Let us open our souls to receive their hallowed influence, in all its fulness,—in all its power! Let us pray, that the spirit of the Pilgrims may be our spirit; their God, our God. And in the strength of that moral feeling which the contemplation of what is old, is calculated to produce in sound minds,—let us ever venerate, and keep alive their memories and their sentiments,—let us act worthy of our sires, and the world shall yet be emancipated by the principles associated with Plymouth rock!

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